

Malayan Aviation in the Making

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Development of Civil Air Communications in the Malay Peninsula and Singapore : Observations by an Official of Malayan Airways

ON May 1st, 1947, nearly two years after V.E. day, an Airspeed Consul took off from Kallang airfield, Singapore, on the first post-war Malayan Airways commercial flight. That aircraft,

VR-SCD, was the second to be entered on the Malayan register, and was preceded only by a Miles Gemini belonging to the Government. Since then more than eighteen have been registered, of which five were Dakotas and three were Consuls belonging to the same local company, Malayan Airways, Limited, two were Geminis belonging to the Government, and the rest were owned by the Singapore and Kuala Lumpur flying clubs, and private owners.

Like most airlines, Malayan Airways started with the accompanying difficulties of uncertain deliveries, the prevarications of governments, and the uncertainties attached to shareholders and their representatives. At the end of

the war Malaya was left with many airstrips built by the British before 1942, some of which had been extended by the Japanese. So many, however—and Gong Kedak in Kalanta is a good example—were long distances from the centres of population, and those which were near the big towns were invariably in urgent need of repair, especially the buildings which, although they were still standing, were in a sorry state of dilapidation. In 1945 R.A.F. Transport Command moved into Malaya, evacuated prisoners of war, and brought in military and civil administrators. A year later B.O.A.C. and Qantas partially restored the civil flying facilities at Singapore and temporarily at the Penang marine base. But it was not until the civil government was firmly re-established, towards the middle of 1946, that the Civil Aviation department assumed effective control and started to replace the temporary R.A.F. facilities. At about that time the Ocean Steamship Company, of Liverpool, and the Straits Steamship Company, of Singapore, planned a Malayan airline, and by May 1st, 1947, the main airfields

(Top): Looking along the East-West runway at Changi airfield, Singapore. On the left can be seen temporary terminal buildings at the southern end of the airfield. (Centre): Terminal buildings at Kuantan on the East coast. (Bottom): An interested passenger talking to a B.O.A.C. receptionist and on the right a Lancastrian engine receiving attention at the same airport.

